

Hamblen County Board of Education

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Attendance

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The Hamblen County Board of Education recognizes that absenteeism is a hindrance to the efficient education of students. Realizing that punctuality and regularity of attendance is necessary for progress of a student at school, the Board has adopted the following attendance policy. The parents, guardians, or other persons having charge and control of a child are held responsible for the child's school attendance.

The Board's intent is to clearly establish teaching and learning tasks as the priority activity in Hamblen County Schools. This emphasis shall mean that class interruptions must be limited to emergencies only. Any outside interference with the continuous progress of teaching and learning shall be considered an interruption. Emergencies exist when conditions arise that make it impossible or impractical to delay class interruptions until the next change of classes.

Furthermore, in order for students to benefit from the strong emphasis on instruction, they must attend class regularly and be on time. The attendance policy is as follows.

Sign-out Procedures

Grades K-5. Students are to be checked out by the parent/guardian through the school office.

Grades 6-8

1. Students shall not be allowed to sign out unless a parent/guardian comes personally to the school office to sign them out.
2. Parents/guardians should take note of the times during which students may be dismissed for non-emergencies. Those times are during the change of classes or at the student's lunch period.
3. Students who are to leave with anyone other than a parent/guardian must have a signed note from the parent/guardian.

Grades 9-12. All students shall be allowed to sign out under the following conditions:

1. The parent/guardian may come to the office to sign the student out. Parents should take note of the times during which students may be dismissed for non-emergencies. Those times are during the change of classes or at the student's lunch period.
2. Parents/guardians must call the main office prior to the time that a student is to leave.

3. A note signed by a parent /guardian must be sent to the office with the following information on that note:

- a. Student name
- b. Grade level
- c. Phone number where parent/guardian can be reached so that the school official can confirm that the student has parental permission to leave school. ALL REQUESTS MUST BE VERIFIED. IF THE PARENT/GUARDIAN CANNOT BE REACHED, THE STUDENT SHALL NOT BE GIVEN PERMISSION TO SIGN OUT EARLY. If students and parents shall use this procedure, unnecessary class interruptions and parents having to wait on a student can be avoided.

4. Students who are eighteen (18) years old or older must also have parental permission to leave school.

TRUANCY

General

Annually, the Director of Schools/designee will provide written notice to parent(s)/ guardian(s) that attendance at school is required. Students shall be present at least fifty percent (50%) of the scheduled school day in order to be counted present. Students may attend part-time days, alternating days, or for a specific amount of time as indicated in their Individualized Education Plan or 504 Plan and shall be considered present for school attendance purposes. If a student is required to participate in a remedial instruction program outside of the regular school day where there is no cost to the parent(s)/ guardian(s) and the school system provides transportation, unexcused absences from these programs shall be reported in the same manner.¹

A student who is absent five (5) days without adequate excuse shall be reported to the Director of Schools/designee who will, in turn, provide written notice to the parent(s)/ guardian(s) of the student's absence. If a parent does not provide documentation within adequate time excusing those absences, or request an attendance hearing, then the Director of Schools shall implement the progressive truancy intervention plan described below prior to referral to juvenile court.

Progressive Truancy Intervention Plan²

Prior to referral to juvenile court, the following progressive truancy intervention plan will be implemented.

Tier 1: Tier of the progressive truancy plan shall apply to all students within the district and include schoolwide prevention-oriented supports to assist with satisfactory attendance. These supports shall include, but are not limited to, parent information meetings, parent nights, school counselor classes on attendance and truancy, and parent-teacher conferences.

Tier 2: Tier 2 will be implemented upon a student's accumulation of 5 unexcused absences and include, at a minimum:

1 - A conference with the student and the parent, guardian, or other person having custodial
2 rights of the student;

3 - A resulting attendance contract to be signed by the student, the parent, guardian, or other
4 person having custodial rights of the student, and a school administrator or designee. The contract must
5 include a specific description of the school's attendance expectations for the student, the period for
6 which the contract is in effect, and penalties for additional absences and alleged school offenses to
7 include disciplinary action and potential referral to juvenile court;

8 - Regularly scheduled follow-up meetings, which may be with the student and the parent,
9 guardian, or other person having custodial rights of the student to discuss the student's progress;

10 - An individualized assessment by a school employee of the reasons a student has been absent
11 from school; and

12 - If necessary, referral of the child to counseling, community-based services, or other in-school
13 or out-of-school services aimed at addressing the student's attendance problems.

14 Tier 3: Tier 3 is implemented if the truancy interventions under Tier 2 are unsuccessful. Tier 3 may
15 consist of one or more of the following:

16 - School-based community services

17 - Participation in a school-based restorative justice program

18 - Referral to an Attendance Review Committee (ARC)

19 - Saturday or after-school courses designed to improve behavior and attendance

20 **Virtual Students**

21 The Progressive Truancy Intervention Plan also applies to virtual students. Virtual students who reach
22 Tier 3 will also be referred to the Attendance Review Committee. The Review Committee will meet
23 with the student and parent to discuss the attendance issues, recommend referrals for any additional
24 school or community-based services, refer the student to juvenile court, or revoke the student's status
25 as a virtual student. If the latter is done, the student will be required to become an in-person student for
26 the remainder of the school year unless a medical condition prohibits in-person attendance. In this
27 case, the student will be referred to juvenile court. All correspondence with parents in Tiers 1 and 2
28 will clearly articulate that continued unexcused absences could result in the student's status as a virtual
29 student to be revoked.

30 **Excused and Unexcused Absences**

31 Grades K-5. Absences shall be classified as either excused or unexcused as determined by the
32 principal or designee in charge of attendance. When a student is absent, the school shall be contacted
33 by the parent/guardian. Upon return to school, the student must present a note signed by the
34 parent/guardian. (Notes should be valid in the judgment of the principal or designee.)

A student is excused for the day or days absent, but not from the responsibility for the material covered in class. It is therefore the responsibility of the student, not the teacher, for make-up work in all subject matters covered during the absence. Absences shall be excused for:³

1. Personal illness; parent/guardian signed note shall be accepted for **three (3)** days for each semester; after **three (3)** days a physician's statement shall be required. **Parent notes will be accepted thirty (30) days after the absence. After thirty (30) days the absence will be considered unexcused.**
2. Death in the immediate family; not to exceed three (3) days
3. Illness of parent/guardian requiring temporary help; physician's statement shall be required
4. Recognized religious holidays⁴
5. Court summons; only time actually in court shall be excused
6. Doctor or dentist appointment; medical statement shall be required
7. Military
8. Injury
9. Hospitalization
10. Homebound
11. Subpoena
12. Court order
13. School-endorsed activities
14. Extenuating circumstances determined on a case-by-case basis by the school principal (family vacations are discouraged during the regular school year)

Absences for any reason other than those listed above shall be unexcused.

Grades 6-8. Absences shall be classified as either excused or unexcused as determined by the principal or designee in charge of attendance. When a student is absent, the school shall be contacted by the parent/guardian. Upon return to school, it is the responsibility of the student to present a note signed by the parent/guardian in order to receive an excused absence.

A student is excused for days absent, but not from the responsibility of the work assigned or completed during the days absent. It is the responsibility of the student, not the teacher, for make-up work in all subject matter covered during the absence. Absences shall be excused for:³

1. Personal illness; parent/guardian signed note shall be accepted for **three (3)** days for each semester; after **three (3)** days a physician's statement shall be required. **Parent notes shall be submitted within thirty (30) days of the absence. After thirty (30) days the absence will be considered unexcused.**
2. Death in the immediate family; not to exceed three (3) days
3. Illness of parent/guardian requiring temporary help; physician's statement shall be required
4. Recognized religious holidays⁴
5. Court summons; only time actually in court shall be excused
6. Doctor or dentist appointment; medical statement shall be required
7. Church-related trip
8. Military
9. Injury
10. Hospitalization
11. Homebound
12. Subpoena
13. Court order
14. School-endorsed activities
15. Pregnancy
16. College Visits
17. Extenuating circumstances determined on a case-by-case basis by the school principal (family vacations are discouraged during the regular school year)

Grades 9-12

1. Excused absences. Following are listed the absences which are excused. An excused absence means that a student's absence was lawful, that he/she had a legitimate reason, according to the laws and regulations of the attendance policy, for missing school. Even though an absence is

excused, however, it may still be used to deny credit in a course. Absences shall be excused for:³

- a. Illness with doctor's excuse
- b. Illness with parent/guardian excuse; **three (3)** parent notes/call-ins during each ninety (90)-day term. **Parent notes shall be submitted within thirty (30) days of the absence. After thirty (30) days the absence will be considered unexcused.**
- c. Death in family
- d. Religious holiday⁴
- e. Medical/dental appointments
- f. Court appointments
- g. Military
- h. Injury
- i. Hospitalization
- j. Homebound
- k. Subpoena
- l. Court order
- m. School-endorsed activities
- n. Pregnancy
- o. College Visits
- p. Extenuating circumstances determined on a case-by-case basis by the school principal (family vacations are discouraged during the regular school year)

2. **Unexcused absences.** Following are listed the absences which are unexcused, along with the code letter which shall be used in processing the absence. Unexcused absences are those which are not considered appropriate absences under the attendance laws and policies. Most of these absences are also unlawful (those absences marked with a "U" are, with some exception, always unlawful). Unlawful absences may result in the student being denied credit due to excessive absences. IMPORTANT: Unlawful absences may also result in placement in an alternate learning program (ALP), out-of-school suspension (OSS), or referral to the juvenile court for judicial enforcement of the attendance laws.

- a. Truancy (U)
- b. Cutting class (U)
- c. Out of town
- d. No excuse submitted (U)
- e. Out-of-school suspension
- f. Not checking out in office (U)
- g. Missed the bus (unexcused because bus transportation is provided)
- h. Trouble with automobile (unexcused because bus transportation is provided)
- i. Unexcused tardy
- j. Check in (unexcused)
- k. Check out (unexcused)
- l. Day missed due to enrolling after first day of school (U)
- m. Absent with parent's permission (in some cases may be "U")
- n. Not checking in at office (U)

Excused and Unexcused Tardies/Early Dismissals

Students are considered tardy if they arrive in the classroom after the bell rings.

1. Excused tardies/early dismissals

- a. Late bus
- b. Illness with doctor's note
- c. Death in family
- d. Religious holiday⁴
- e. Medical/dental appointment

2. Unexcused tardies/early dismissals (Grades K-5)

- a. Tardy # 3 Parent contact by mail

- b. Tardy # 6 Loss of perfect attendance, parent contact by attendance personnel
 - c. Tardy # 8 to 10 Tardy Contract
 - d. Tardy # 11 or more: Attendance Review Committee
 - e. Five unexcused tardies/early dismissals will be considered an unexcused absence.
3. Unexcused tardies/early dismissals (Grades 6-12)
- Students who are tardy to first period shall receive two (2) warnings before penalties are assessed. Additional tardies for first period and all tardies/early dismissals for other periods shall be assessed as follows:
- a. Tardy #1 One (1) hour detention
 - b. Tardy #2 Two (2) hour detention
 - c. Tardy #3 Three (3) hour detention; parent contact required
 - d. Tardy #4 One (1) day placement in ALP; parent contact required
 - e. Tardy #5 Two (2) days placement in ALP; parent conference required
 - f. Tardy #6 Student shall be subject to further ALP placements, office referrals, and/or juvenile court
 - g. Five unexcused tardies/early dismissals will be considered an unexcused absence.

Absences, Make-up, and Student Grading

A student shall be considered present if the student is present at least twenty-six (26) minutes of a middle school class period or at least seventy (70) minutes of a high school class period. Any high school student who has a passing average, no more than two (2) excused absences, no ALP, no OSS, no unexcused absences, no unexcused tardies, and no alternative school placement during the nine-weeks shall have two (2) points added to the nine-weeks average in which they meet the previously stated criteria.

Any assignments missed due to any absence should be made up as quickly as possible. This shall make the assignment most beneficial as it is completed in its proper context and scope. Further, it is most helpful to the teacher in making assessment of student progress. The number of days missed is the number of days the student shall be given to complete the assignment. For example, a student who misses Monday and Tuesday and returns Wednesday shall turn in the work due on Monday and Tuesday at the beginning of class on Friday. Failure of a student to turn in assignments within these guidelines shall result in zeros being recorded for the missed assignments. These zeros cannot be waived in figuring a student's final grade and shall count as much as the assignments would have counted. An exception to this is that a student on suspension must have missed assignments ready to turn in upon their return to class.

1 Any high school student who is proven to be truant from a class or for the school day is not eligible to
2 make up missed assignments or tests.

3 Missed high school term exams may be made up only with a doctor's excuse or prior approval of the
4 principal.

5 Students with a minimum average of 50 shall be permitted to make up all work due to absences, with
6 the exception of truancy. Make-up work shall be graded as late work and shall reflect the grade of
7 60/D. Students who participate in recognized school functions or events are not to be counted absent,
8 but they are responsible for work missed under the above guidelines of the make-up policy.

9 Middle school students must follow these guidelines for makeup work:

- 10 1. All work made up for grades must fall within the excused/unexcused absence guidelines.
11
- 12 2. Each semester, up to five (5) excused absences with a parent note shall be honored at full
13 credit for all completed work turned in by the student.
14
- 15 3. Absences with a doctor's statement shall be honored as excused absences, with make-up
16 work honored at full credit.
17
- 18 4. All make-up connected with an unexcused absence shall be given to the student upon
19 request from the student, but shall be graded as late work and shall not be graded with full
20 credit.
21
- 22 5. Students shall have one (1) day for each day missed up to three (3) days to pick up their
23 missed work, complete it, and turn it in to the teacher for a grade.
24
- 25 6. Students who shall be out of school for more than three (3) days must make arrangements
26 to have work picked up at school.
27
- 28 7. Students leaving school before the end of the school day shall be required to bring in any
29 previously assigned work to the teacher before leaving, or the work shall be considered late
30 work and graded according to late work guidelines.

31 A middle school student who follows these guidelines in turning in assignments may have that absence
32 waived for promotion purposes.

33 At the end of each term, all high school students shall take all exams.

34 High school students who have a passing average, two (2) excused absences or less, no ISS, no OSS,
35 no unexcused tardies, and no alternative school placement during the term shall have two (2) points
36 added onto their term average.

37 **State Mandated Assessments**

Students who are absent the day of the scheduled and end-of-course (EOC) exams shall present a signed doctor's excuse or shall have been given an excused release by the principal prior to testing to receive an excused absence. Students who have excused, or unexcused, absences will be allowed to take a make-up exam. Excused students will receive an incomplete in the course until they have taken the EOC exam. Students who do not take the exam, unless medically exempt, shall receive a failing grade on the EOC exam which shall be averaged into their final grade.

Student Responsibility

It is the student's responsibility to periodically check with teachers concerning his/her absences. Students are encouraged to keep record of their absences. Any error or discrepancy should be immediately brought to the attention of the teacher. The teacher's attendance record is the official record for consideration of credit or for determining perfect attendance. If a student is told by a teacher that he/she has lost credit due to excessive absences, the student should obtain from that teacher a list of the days missed.

Grades K-5 student absences. Excessive absences may limit progress to the point that promotion is questionable. If parents choose to appeal this decision, a written request must be made to the school attendance committee.

Grades 6-8 student absences. Students cannot receive credit for a class if they miss more than ten (10) days per semester within a school year, regardless of the grade received; however, a class absence can be waived for grading purposes if missed assignments are turned in within the guidelines of this policy

Grades 9-12 student absences:

1. Students who have five (5) absences in a class shall be sent a letter informing the parents of the absences. Students who have more than ten (10) absences in a class per term shall not receive credit for the class. If students transfer from one class to another, their attendance shall follow the students.
2. Students who have more than ten (10) absences in a term may submit a written request to the school attendance review committee for an appeal. The only absences that shall be waived are those with medical excuses that have not been altered in any way or those due to death in the immediate family. Immediate family members include parents, brothers, sisters, and grandparents.⁵
3. If dissatisfied with the decision of the school attendance review committee, the student and parent/guardian may, within five (5) days, make a written request for an appeal to the Hamblen County Attendance Review Committee (HCARC), approved by the Board annually in August. Options of the HCARC are:
 - a. Referral to counseling and/or intervention programs if the absences are not due to extenuating or hardship circumstances
 - b. Expulsion of the student for the remainder of the term, with loss of all credit
 - c. Waiver of the absences due to hardship or extenuating circumstances
4. ALP, OSS, or school functions are not counted toward the daily absentee count.

5. Students who have five (5) or more unexcused absences within a ninety (90)-day term may be petitioned to juvenile court.

Procedures for Unexcused Absences

Grades K-5: Parents of elementary students shall be notified by letter or phone when their child receives the third unexcused absence. Pupil Personnel Department staff shall contact parents after the fourth unexcused absence. A student shall be placed on an **Attendance Contract** or face other disciplinary action after the fifth unexcused absence. Students with excessive absences may be referred to the HCARC at the discretion of the principal.

Grades 6-8: A middle school student may face disciplinary action for any unexcused absence and shall be petitioned to juvenile court or face other disciplinary action after the fifth unexcused absence. Students with excessive absences may be referred to the HCARC at the discretion of the principal.

Grades 9-12: Any student fifteen (15) years of age or older who becomes deficient in attendance shall be reported to the Tennessee Department of Safety for driver's license revocation. A student shall be deemed deficient in attendance when he/she drops out of school or has ten (10) consecutive or fifteen (15) days total unexcused absences during a single term.⁶ Suspensions shall be considered unexcused absences. A copy of the notice sent to the Tennessee Department of Safety by the attendance teacher or the director of schools shall also be mailed to the student's parent / guardian.

Excessive Absences of Students 18 Years of Age

Although these students are no longer compelled to abide by the Compulsory School Attendance Law, students who have reached the age of eighteen (18) shall be in regular attendance. Students who are eighteen (18) years of age or older and whose attendance shall prevent them from receiving credit shall be referred to the HCARC.

Marketing/Co-op Work Attendance Requirement

All marketing/co-op students are required to be employed in order to be eligible for early school release. Failure to report dismissal or termination of employment within five (5) school days shall result in loss of work experience credit. The student must report back to school within five (5) school days for appropriate placement.

Attendance Accounting Policy - General Information

The purpose of this attendance policy is to provide a uniform method of reporting student attendance.

1. For instructional purposes, a school year shall consist of nine (9) attendance periods of twenty (20) days each of classroom instruction for a total of one hundred eighty (180) days. Any school system may schedule more than one hundred eighty (180) days of classroom instruction if it so desires, but in such case the ninth attendance period shall be the period extended.
2. Attendance accounting shall begin with the first day of the scheduled one hundred eighty (180) days and shall continue each day throughout the school year. Only three (3) abbreviated days shall be allowed as full-time attendance of the one hundred eighty (180) days of instruction.

3. The actual time that pupils are required to be in school shall be at least seven (7) hours.
4. A pupil in Grades K-12 who is in attendance a major portion of the state required minimum school day, three (3) hours and thirty-one (31) minutes for Grades 1-12, shall be counted as being in full-time equivalent average daily attendance for that day. A student who is in attendance less than three (3) hours and thirty-one (31) minutes shall not be counted in attendance for any portion of that day.
5. For students in Grades 9-12 determined to be in attendance, the FTEADA shall be calculated and reported on a prorated basis for general education (academic) and comprehensive vocational programs based upon the time the student spends in the respective programs. For example, students may participate in 1, 2, or 3 hour vocational blocks and shall be counted as: 1 hour = 1/6 FTEADA; 2 hours = 2/6 FTEADA; 3 hours = 3/6 FTEADA. The remaining portion of the day if in attendance shall be counted as general education (academic)
6. A maximum of thirteen (13) days may be missed for snow before any make-up is scheduled.
7. An activity shall be considered school-sponsored only if school planned, school directed, and staff supervised. Mass exodus or early dismissal/late arrival of all students or any segment of students shall not be permitted for any reason except emergencies such as inclement weather or other unavoidable situations, unless instructional time is made up in full.
8. Truancy or unexcused absence is defined as an absence for an entire school day, a major portion of the school day, or the major portion of any class or activity during the school day for which the student is scheduled.
9. Student attendance records shall be given the same level of confidentiality as other student records. Authorized school officials, for legitimate educational purposes only, may have access to student information without the consent of the student or parent/guardian.
10. With approval of the State Commissioner of Education, the Board shall determine annually whether or not to use flexible scheduling for kindergarten students.
11. Interviews with pupils by persons other than professional staff of Hamblen County Schools must have the approval of the school principal/designee and the pupils' parents. If such interviews are conducted by officers of the law or representatives of the Department of Human Services, they must have prior approval of the principal, and the student shall have the right to refuse to talk to these persons while at school.

Attendance Supervisor's Attendance Responsibilities

The attendance supervisor shall oversee the entire attendance program, which shall include:⁷

1. All accounting and reporting procedures and their dissemination;

2. Alternative program option for students who severely fail to meet minimum attendance requirements; and
3. Ensuring that all school-age children attend school.

Principal's Attendance Responsibilities

The principal shall be responsible for ensuring that:⁸

1. Attendance is checked and reported daily for each class;
2. Daily absentee sheets contain sign-in/sign-out data indicating students' presence or absence for the major portion of the day;
3. All students' absences are followed up;
4. Written excuses are submitted for absences, tardies, and early dismissals;
5. Verification, if necessary, is acquired from an official or other sources to justify absences; and
6. System-wide procedures for accounting and reporting are followed.

Attendance Incentive Programs for Middle School

Each middle school shall provide an incentive program to reward perfect attendance and/or good attendance. This shall consist of short-term and long-term activities.

Legal References

1. TCA 49-6-3021
2. TCA 49-6-3007; TCA 49-6-3009
3. TRR/MS 0520-01-02-.17(5); State Board of Education Policy 4.100
4. TCA 49-6-2904(b)(5)
5. TRR/MS 0520-01-02-.17
6. TCA 49-6-3017(c); Public Acts of 2022, Chapter No. 878
7. TCA 49-6-3006
8. TCA 49-6-3007

